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**Employment among the non-Finnish alumni of the  
Degree programme in International Business of  
Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences**

Thesis

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School of business and culture

Degree Programme in international business



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## **Thesis abstract**

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This study was conducted to gain a better understanding of the employment situation of the non-Finnish alumni of the Degree Programme in International Business of Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences. The theoretical background of the study is based on existing statistics on people of foreign background in Finland. This part contains information about people of foreign background in general, their employment, non-Finnish degree students at the Finnish universities, and international students at Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences.

The data was collected through an online survey, to which 20 answers were received. In addition, the survey included questions about the development of the alumni activities at Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences. The survey was conducted between 1.5.2017 and 1.7.2017.

The study shows that the majority of the respondents were employed, but only a few of them had found a job in the field they had studied. Most of the respondents had also found employment within a year of their graduation and were still living in Seinäjoki.

Keywords: employment, immigration, internationality, studying abroad

SEINÄJOEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

## Opinnäytetyön tiivistelmä

Koulutusyksikkö: Liiketoiminta ja kulttuuri

Tutkinto-ohjelma: Degree programme in International Business

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Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli saada parempi kuva Seinäjoen ammattikorkeakoulun Degree Programme in International Business -ohjelmasta valmistuneiden työmarkkinatilanteesta. Tutkimuksen teoreettisena viitekehyksenä käytettiin Suomessa asuvia ulkomaalaistaustaisia henkilöitä koskevaa tilastotietoa. Tähän osaan sisältyy tilastotietoa ulkomaalaistaustaisista Suomessa, ulkomaalaistaustaisten työllisyydestä Suomessa, ulkomaalaisista tutkinto-opiskelijoista suomalaisissa yliopistoissa sekä kansainvälisistä opiskelijoista Seinäjoen ammattikorkeakoulussa.

Tutkimus toteutettiin nettikyselynä, johon saatiin 20 vastausta. Kysely sisälsi lisäksi muutamia kysymyksiä alumnitoiminnan kehittämisestä Seinäjoen ammattikorkeakoulussa. Kysely toteutettiin 1.5.2017 ja 1.7.2017 välisenä aikana.

Kyselyn tuloksista käy ilmi, että vaikka valtaosa kyselyyn osallistuneista oli työllistynyt, vain harva oli löytänyt koulutustaan vastaavaa työtä. Useimmat vastanneista olivat löytäneet työpaikan vuoden sisällä valmistumisesta, sekä asuivat yhä Seinäjoella.

Asiasanat: työllisyys, maahanmuutto, kansainvälisyys, opiskelu ulkomailla

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## Terms and Abbreviations

<b>Seamk</b>	Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences
<b>IB</b>	International business
<b>UTH study</b>	Survey on work and well-being among people of foreign origin 2014 (“ <b>U</b> lkomaista syntyperää olevien <b>T</b> yö ja <b>H</b> yvinvointi Suomessa 2014”)

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate employment situation among the non-Finnish graduates of Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences International Business degree programme. The research is conducted to benefit Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences. The motivation to conduct the study was found when the author repeatedly heard accounts of his non-Finnish peers' challenges in finding employment, especially in the field of international business. By these accounts the author formed a hypothesis, that Seamk is producing professionals for whom it is close to impossible to find employment in Seinäjoki or the surrounding municipalities. The study aims to determine whether this conception is to any degree true, and find out which qualities or skills have enabled those working in the field of international business to find employment.

## 1.2 Purpose of the study

The study aims to find out:

- if the participants have found employment
- how long it took to find employment, or how long they have been looking for employment
- if the position they hold or have applied for is related to international business
- where they have applied for jobs
- if the participants' internship or thesis work had a direct effect on their employment
- how the participants have experienced job search in Finland.



### **1.3 Alumni survey**

As was requested by the faculty, the survey also includes questions concerning alumni events. The purpose of these questions is to inform the faculty about what kinds of events the alumni would be interested in attending and what would be the most suitable time of the week for them to attend said events.

## 2 FOREIGN POPULATION IN FINLAND

### 2.1 People of foreign background in Finland

On Väestöliitto defines the concepts considering immigration on their website (Miettinen, [Ref. 27 March 2018]). These definitions are portrayed from such a point of view, that Finland is destination of migration. The word immigrant is usually used to describe a foreign national who migrates into a country with an intent to stay for an extended period. The definition also often includes children of immigrants and second-generation immigrants. A remigrant is someone who, or whose parents are, or were Finnish nationals, and is moving back to Finland. A migrant worker is someone who moves to Finland temporarily for work. Migrant workers, while foreign nationals, are not regarded as immigrants in statistics. Asylum seeker is someone who flees persecution, and is seeking international protection and right of residence in Finland. The 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention defines a refugee to be someone who has a reasonable risk of being persecuted in his or her home country. According to the agreement neither war, natural disaster, nor poverty are reasons for refugee status. By the Finnish definition a person who has been allowed to stay in the country for need of protection or humanitarian reasons can also be called a refugee.

It is stated on Väestöliitto's website (Miettinen, [Ref. 27 March 2018]) that statistical number of immigrants in Finland depends on the metric used; defining factors used are nationality, language and country of origin. Defining an immigrant as a foreign national, the immigrant population in Finland in 2016 was 243 600, which made up 4.0 percent of the whole population. Defining an immigrant by native language, the number of immigrants 353 993, which made up 6.4 percent of the population. When defining an immigrant as someone who is born outside of Finland, the number was 6.5 percent.

Most economists agree that the increased working age population from immigration is a welcome phenomenon. A large percentage of the native Finnish population is retired or about to retire. This causes a shortage of workers on the job market. This deficit is mended by the workforce moving in from abroad.

The number of people of foreign background in Finland has increased considerably over the last few decades (Sutelan & Larja, 2015). In 1996, there were roughly 75 000 foreign nationals residing in Finland. In 2014 the number was roughly 229 000. Even though the immigration to Finland has increased, there are still relatively few people of foreign background in Finland. According to OECD, 2013 approximately 5.6 percent of Finland's population were foreign-born. The number is low when comparing to the countries with the largest foreign-born populations such as Luxemburg, where the number was 43.7 percent, in Switzerland (28.3 %), or in Australia (27.7 %). For the sake of comparison to countries more similar to Finland, the foreign-born population in Sweden in 2013 was 16.0 percent and in Norway 13.9 percent.

The largest immigrant populations in Finland at the end of 2016 by language were Russians, 77 177 people; Estonians, 49 590 people and Arabs, 26 467 (Tilastokeskus: Väestö. 2018). By nationality, the largest groups in 2017 were Estonians, 51 539 people (20.7 percent of the population of Finland); Russians, 29 183 people (11.7 %) and Iraqis, 11 729 people (4.7 %).

The following information considers reasons for immigration based on the UTH study (Nieminen, Sutela & Hannula 2014, 15—28). Study participants are between the ages of 15 and 64. The leading reason for foreigners to migrate to Finland is family. A study shows that in 2014, 54 percent of the immigration to Finland was motivated by family or relationship. Second most common reason for immigration is work. In 2014 there were 41 000 foreign nationals in Finland, who had moved to the country for work. Work related immigration makes up for 18 percent of the total number of immigrants. 10 percent of the immigrants have come to Finland mainly to study. The remaining 11 percent have come to Finland as refugees or in need of a sanctuary.

People from different countries move to Finland for different reasons (Nieminen, Sutela & Hannula 2014, 15—28). In 2014, 51 percent of the Estonian immigrants in Finland stated work to be the reason for coming to the country. People from Middle Eastern and Northern African countries had often come to Finland as refugees (42 %). Family reasons were the most common reason for immigration for people from Russia and former Soviet Union (59 %). People from EU and EFTA states, and North America also often moved to Finland for family reasons (58 %).

The difference between the number of male and female immigrants is rather low (Nieminen, Sutela & Hannula 2014, 16). In 2014 number of men of foreign origin was 115 000 while number of women of foreign origin was 114 000. Even though the distribution of male and female immigrants is relatively even, the reasons of immigration differ considerably between the sexes. 65.8 percent of the female immigrants named family or relationship the main reason for moving to Finland while it was the main reason for only 41.7 percent of the male immigrants. 23.5 percent of the male immigrants have said to have come to Finland for work, when the corresponding number for female immigrants is 12.3 percent. Despite the differences, family and relationship was the most common reason for immigration to Finland for both sexes.

People of foreign background were on average more likely to be unemployed than native Finns (Nieminen, Sutela & Hannula 2014, 71—82). A person of foreign background was defined to be someone both of whose parents were born outside of Finland. This definition therefore includes the second-generation immigrants. In this chapter they will be referred to as “immigrants”. Nieminen, Sutela & Hannula (2014, 73) define “being employed” according to the United Nations International Labor Organization (ILO). For someone to be employed by ILO definition, the person must work regularly for at least an hour per week. It is important to note, that people of foreign background are a non-uniform group of people with various cultural, religious and educational backgrounds. Employment rates vary greatly between groups immigrants. Among the most notable factors in employment rate are sex, country of origin, education, language proficiency, reason for immigration and how long they had already lived in Finland. Employment rate of native Finnish population was 74 percent while the corresponding number for the Finland’s immigrant population was 64 percent.

UTH study (Nieminen, Sutela & Hannula 2014, 71—82) shows that employment rate of immigrant women between the ages of 20 and 64 (56.1 %) was much lower than that of immigrant men of the ages of 20 and 64 (71 %). This difference does not manifest itself within the native Finnish population; employment rate of native Finnish men (73.8 %) was almost equal to that of native Finnish women (74 %).

Employment rates of Finnish natives of both sexes and immigrant men were all really close to each other, but the situation among immigrant women was considerably worse. This disparity is partially explained by the fact that immigrant women tend to have children at a younger age than the Finnish women. Immigrant women were also more likely to declare taking care of their children as their primary activity.

The employment rate between immigrants from different countries varies greatly (Nieminen, Sutela & Hannula 2014, 71–82). In 2014 people with certain backgrounds had an employment rate equal or even greater than the native Finnish people in average. For example, people from Estonia were in the top of the chart with employment rate of 76 percent. This is mostly explained by the fact that moving to Finland for work is very common in Estonia. Second were the people from EU, EFTA states and North America (75 %). People of Finnish background were third in the comparison. Other groups with employment rate within 10 percentage points from Finnish were people from Asia (68 %), Latin America, and Eastern Europe (66 %). People from the Middle East and Northern Africa have the worst situation, with employment rate of only 46 percent. Employment situation of people from sub-Saharan Africa is not much better with their employment rate being 48 percent.

Language proficiency was found to be one of the most important factors in finding employment in Finland (Nieminen, Sutela & Hannula 2014, 73–76). People of foreign background who speak Finnish as the first language had an employment rate of 75 percent. The rate for advanced level speakers was 72 percent. The study found, that one had to be at least an advanced level speaker for the language skill to provide any considerable advantage on the job market. Employment rates for Intermediate speakers (58 %) and speakers with beginner skill or less in the language (57 %) were close to equal. UTH study shows that in 2014, 39 percent of the non-working people of foreign origin between the ages 20 and 64 stated the lack of language skill as the most important reason for not finding employment (Nieminen, Sutela & Hannula 2014, 130).

The UTH study reports a positive correlation between employment rate and level of education (Nieminen, Sutela & Hannula 2014, 73–76). Those with a higher education level were more likely to be employed. This was equally true for both Finnish people and people with foreign background. Men with foreign background had an

employment close to the Finnish men with similar educational background. Men with foreign background with only basic level education had a higher employment rate (65 %) than the Finnish men with the same level of education (55 %.) Employment rate for men with foreign background with higher secondary level education was 68 percent and for higher level education 83 percent. For men with Finnish background these numbers were 74 percent for upper secondary level and 86 percent for higher education level. For women of foreign background, the employment rate is lower than Finnish women with a similar educational background. While employment rates for Finnish women (basic level 55 percent, upper secondary level 70 percent, and higher education level 83 percent) are only slightly lower than those of Finnish men, the numbers for women with foreign background were considerably worse. Employment rate for women with foreign background with basic level education was 41 percent, upper secondary level 59 percent and higher education level 62 percent. This difference is again explained by the fact that women with a foreign background were more likely to start a family younger and were more likely to stay home with the children than women with a Finnish background. It was also perceived, that the employment rate of immigrant women rises a lot during the first 10 years of living in Finland.

Time spent in Finland increases the employment rate for all immigrants (Nieminen, Sutela & Hannula 2014, 76—80). For refugees this was the single most influential factor affecting employment. The UTH study could not gather enough data to make a reliable conclusion about the employment rate of refugees who had been in Finland for 5 years or less. However, the study reported a considerable improvement in the employment rate of the people with refugee background over time. Employment rate of those who had been in the country for over 10 years was 52 percent, while the number for those who had been in the country for 5 to 10 years was only 30 percent. Employment rate of foreign students in Finland displayed a similar trend: 66 percent for those who had been in the country for 0 - 5 years, 77 percent for 5 to 10 years of stay, and after 10 years 90 percent. The low employment rate for the students who had only been in the country for less than 5 years is easily explained by them still being in school. According to the UTH study, it is common for foreign students to leave Finland after graduating, but those who stayed were usually those who had found employment. This explains the high employment rate after 10 years

of stay. People who move to Finland mainly for work had relatively high employment rate. Those who had stayed in the country for less than five years had an employment rate of 89 percent. The number was equal to those who had stayed for over than 10 years, but for those who had stayed in Finland for 5 to 10 years had an employment rate of 84 percent. Immigrants who had moved to Finland for family reasons had quite a low employment rate, but it rose steadily over time: those who had stayed for less than 5 years had an employment rate of 39 percent. Those who had stayed 5 to 10 years had an employment rate of 50 percent, and the ones who had stayed for over 10 years 71 percent.

Working age foreigners are twice as likely to be unemployed compared to native Finns (Myrskylä & Pyykkönen, 25 March 2014). During the 2000s' this difference has shrunk considerably. Between 2000 and 2011 the number of foreigners in Finland has increased 200 percent. The number of unemployed foreigners has also increased. There were 1.8 times as many unemployed foreigners in Finland in 2011 than there were in 2000. Growth of the number of unemployed foreigners is considerably lower than the growth of the number of employed ones. Employment among foreign nationals in Finland has increased faster than among native Finns. People with foreign background are much less likely to claim disability compensation or early retirement on for health reasons compared to native Finns. They are also more active on when searching for work and make use of wider variety of job search channels and methods.

## **2.2 Foreign students in Finland**

There were 21 061 foreign degree programme students in Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences in 2016 (Faktaa. Express, 2017, 2). 11 194 of these students studied in (traditional) universities and 9 867 studied in universities of applied sciences. The number of foreign degree students in Finland has increased significantly during the 2000s'. In 2001, there were only 6 877 foreign degree students in Finnish higher education establishments. From there on, foreign student

body has steadily grown. The number of foreign programme students in Finland has tripled during 2000s'.

In 2016 most of the foreign degree students in Finland (77 percent) came from outside EU/ETA. Asia (45 %) and Europe (39%) make up for the largest share of foreign students, being home for percent of the foreign students in Finland each (Faktaa. Express, 2017, 2—4). There are some differences between universities and universities of applied sciences. There are more European and African students in universities of applied sciences and more Asians in in universities. Between 2005 and 2016 the number of Asian students in Finnish degree programmes has proportionally increased the most. In UAS the proportional decrease happened in African students and in UNI there were less European students. From individual countries, Russia, Vietnam, and Nepal were the most common countries of origin for foreign students in Finnish universities of applied sciences in 2016. In universities most common countries of origin for foreign students were China, Russia, and India.

There were noticeable differences between universities and universities of applied sciences when looking at foreign students' fields of study (Faktaa. Express, 2017, 2—4). Fields of technology and logistics, and business, administration and social sciences were generally the most popular. Combined these two categories make up for roughly 60 percent of all foreign degree students in Finnish higher education. Fields of tourism, nutrition and economy are least appealing for foreign students. In university of applied sciences, the most popular fields of study are technology and logistics, and business and administration. In university the foreign students most often go for fields of technology and logistics, and culture and humanistic sciences.

### **2.3 Foreign students in Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences**

Seinäjoki University of Applied sciences has roughly 200 partner schools in 49 countries around the world. This network enables a wide cross-cultural cooperation in both visiting lecturers and exchange students. SEAMK offers two bachelor's degree programmes in English language; bachelor degree programme in international business and bachelor degree programme in nursing. Additionally, SEAMK offers one higher UAS degree, master's degree in international business management. These



programmes make it possible for non-Finnish speaking students to get a degree in SEAMK. In 2016 there were 193 foreign degree students in SEAMK (Seamk: Kansainvälinen opiskelu, 2018).

### **3 METHODS AND MATERIALS**

#### **3.1 The survey**

Information was gathered via online survey that was conducted between 1.5.2017 and 1.7.2017. The study places focus on Seinäjoki and its surrounding areas. To achieve this, multiple choice questions in the survey have multiple positive answer choices specifying where the survey participant has, for example, applied for a position in the field of international business. The choices given are usually in Seinäjoki, elsewhere in Southern Ostrobothnia, elsewhere in Finland, in one's home country/country of origin or elsewhere. For the “elsewhere” option, the participants are asked to specify where they have applied for the job.

To make the analysis of the results more manageable multiple-choice questions are used whenever possible. Linear answer scale has only been used to survey participants' language proficiency. The survey also includes many open answer questions in the end of the survey, which aim to gather participants' experiences and feelings about working and searching for work in Finland.

Survey form can be found in full in the appendices.

#### **3.2 The eligible participants**

Any non-Finnish Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences degree programme in international business graduate eligible to participate in the study. To find participants for the study International business graduates two main methods will be used: mass email sent to address lists provided by the faculty, and contacting graduates within the author's personal social network.

### **3.3 Survey questions**

#### **3.3.1 Basic information**

Participants are asked the following questions:

- When did you start your studies?
- year of graduation
- sex
- home country/Country of origin

For the questions asking about the starting and ending of the participants studies, lists of years were given as choices for answer. In the question about sex, there were two choice; male and female. Home country was asked to be entered in a free text form.

#### **3.3.2 Language skills**

Participants' were asked to assess their own language skills from a scale from zero to five in Finnish, English and Swedish. The scale that is used is ILR skill level descriptions for competence in intercultural communication (Interagency Language Roundtable, 2012).

Interagency language roundtable skill level descriptions for competence in intercultural communication

- 0: I can't speak or understand the language at all;
- 1: Elementary Proficiency (I understand the basics of the language and can perform basic tasks such as grocery shopping, traveling, ordering movie tickets etc. using these language skills. I can understand simple phrases and statements.)
- 2: Limited Working Proficiency (I am able to use the language in a work environment at a limited level. I can handle various social situations with

- confidence and have intermediate level conversations about current events, my life, my work etc. I can handle simple grammatical constructions accurately but have trouble with more complex structures and make errors fairly often when speaking.)
- 3: Professional Working Proficiency (I am able to speak the language effectively and accurately in most formal and informal situations covering social, practical, and work topics. My grammatical errors do not interfere with someone understanding my speech.)
  - 4: Full Professional Proficiency I am able to use the language accurately and fluently in most or all areas relevant to my professional and everyday needs. I can participate in a range of conversations with a high degree of fluency and confidence. I would not be confused with a native speaker, but I can respond appropriately even in unfamiliar situations. My errors are rare.)
  - 5: Native or Bilingual Proficiency (I have the speaking proficiency equivalent to an educated native speaker. I have complete fluency in the language, and am knowledgeable of even idioms, colloquialisms, and cultural references.)

### **3.3.3 Employment**

There were four questions in the survey about the participants' employment. The questions are partial sentences, which the participants are asked to complete from the given answer choices. Subjects of these questions are current place of residence, whether the participant has applied for a work position in the field of international business or a field other than international business, and if the participant has found employment. The answer choices in this part of the survey focus on if the participants have applied for or have been able to find employment in Seinäjoki and the surrounding areas. All questions contain a "none of the above" option. If the participant chooses this answer, additional information is asked in form of a free form text answer. The final question of this part of the survey asks if the participant has found employment, and whether it was on a field of international business or not. The answer to this question directs the participants into two sets of questions:

one for those who have found employment and those who have not. There's also a third set of questions for those participants who selected the answer option "I am a full-time student".

### **3.3.4 Questions for the employed**

Participants who selected one of the yes answers to the last part's final question are directed here. This part of the survey contains questions about the participants' work and job search. There is also a question about if the participants' thesis or internship had a direct effect on their employment. Questions in this part are as follows:

Questions for the employed

- My employment is ("permanent" or "fixed-term").
- What is your position in the company or organization you work for?
- What channels did you utilize in your job search?
- How long did you look for work before your employment?
- Are you employed by the company at which you did your internship, or by the company that ordered/supported your thesis?
- Finding work was ("really easy", "easy", "hard", or "really hard")

The first question is a simple choice between two options; permanent or fixed-term. In case someone has a more complicated work arrangement an additional option of something else was also included. In the question asking about the work position the participants are asked to write their answer in a free text form. The question about job search channels, the participants are given five choices: direct contact to the company, employment office, job search sites in the internet, social media and one's own personal networks. There is also something else option with free text field. The participants can choose any number of answers for this question. In the next questions the participants are asked how long it took for them to find employment. There are multiple answer choices for this question from which the participant can choose one. The answer choices are: less than a month, 1 to 3 months, 4 to 6 months, 7 to 11 months, a year, and onwards from there with 1-year intervals. In the question asking whether the internship and thesis aiding in job search the participants are given answer choices of one or both of the aforementioned having a

helped them in their job search. There is also an option for those who were introduced to their future employer during their internship at another company. The last question of this part is a simple question of how difficult the participants found job search process.

### **3.3.5 Questions for the unemployed**

Participants who answers no to the question “Have you found employment?” are directed here. This part of the survey contains questions about the participants’ job search methods and job search time.

Questions for the unemployed

- What channels have you utilized in your job search?
- How long have you been looking for employment?

The answer choices are effectively the same as in the corresponding questions for the employed participants.

### **3.3.6 Questions for students**

The participants who are currently students are directed to these questions. The questions in this part aim to determine basic information about what field the alumni of Seamk’s IB programme are studying after graduation. The other questions in this part are about the primary teaching language, the location of the school, the time between graduating from Seamk and starting new studies, and if the participant has been working during his or her current studies. All of the questions in this part are open questions, because the author sees it unlikely that there will be a lot of participants who are currently students and so analyzing the answers will not be too time consuming.

### 3.3.7 Open questions

Questions in this part are all open with large text fields as an answer method. With these questions the author hopes to capture participants' personal experiences as a foreign national looking for work in Finland. The author recognizes that some of the participants are likely to reside outside of Finland and this has been taken in account by adding a question about job search as a foreigner anywhere in the world. All of the questions in this part are visible to all of the participants, although not all of the questions are applicable to all participants. Therefore the participants are asked to answer the questions that apply to him or her.

#### Open questions

- What do you see as the biggest reason you have not found employment?
- What do you think is the most challenging about finding employment outside of your native country?
- What has been the biggest challenge for you when searching for work in Finland as a non-Finnish person?
- What do you think are the most valuable skills taught by the BBA program?
- How could the university better prepare its students for entry into the work force?

Lastly there is a text field in the end of the open question part, where the participants can express anything they feel was left unasked in the survey. This is the end of the survey relevant to the thesis study.

### 3.3.8 Questions regarding alumni work

By the request of the faculty, questions about improving the alumni activities in Seamk were included in the survey form. The questions are open, expecting text answers.

#### Questions regarding alumni work

- Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences is working to increase interaction between the alumni and the current students. What type of event would you be interested in attending? (for example, lectures, presentations, free socializing/networking events)
- What would be the best time for you to attend an alumni event? (For example, weekday evening, in Saturday afternoon or Saturday evening)
- Does the company or organization you work for have internship or thesis topic opportunities to offer to SeAMK students? Please give any necessary contact information, including who to contact.



## 4 THE SURVEY RESULTS

The survey was answered by 20 eligible non-Finnish graduates of Seamk IB programme. Participants started their studies between 2006 and 2013.

### 4.1 Geographical matters

Majority of participants were from Asia and Africa. There were nine participants from Asia, seven from Africa and two from both Europe and North America.

#### Participants by continent

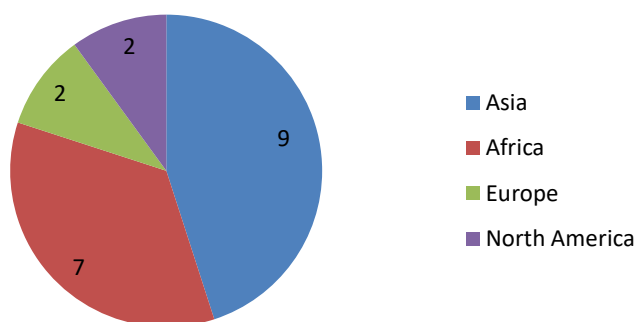


Figure 1. Survey participants by continent.

16 of the 20 participants were living in Finland at the time of the survey. Three were living in their home country and one was living in Australia. Of the 16 participants living in Finland 10 were living in Seinäjoki, one elsewhere in South Ostrobothnia, five elsewhere in Finland.

## Participants' current living country

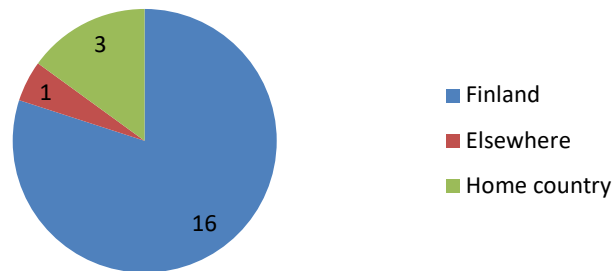


Figure 2. Survey participants' current living country.

## Participants living in Finland

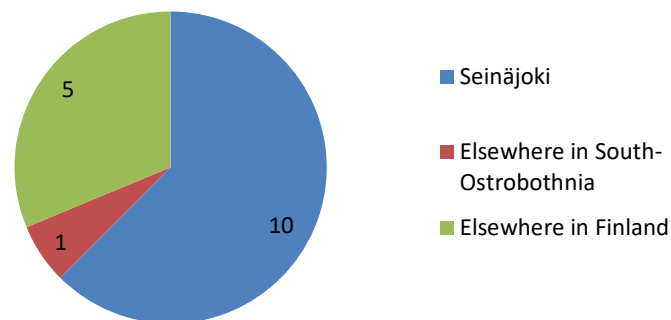


Figure 3. Survey participants living in Finland.

14 of the 20 participants had applied for a job in the field of international business. Out of these 14, 10 had done so in Seinäjoki, three elsewhere in South Ostrobothnia, two in their country of origin and one somewhere else. Participants could submit multiple answers to the question.

13 of the 20 participants had applied for a job in a field other than international business. Out of these 13, nine had done so in Seinäjoki, four elsewhere in South Ostrobothnia, four elsewhere in Finland, two in their country of origin and one somewhere else. Participants could submit multiple answers to the question.

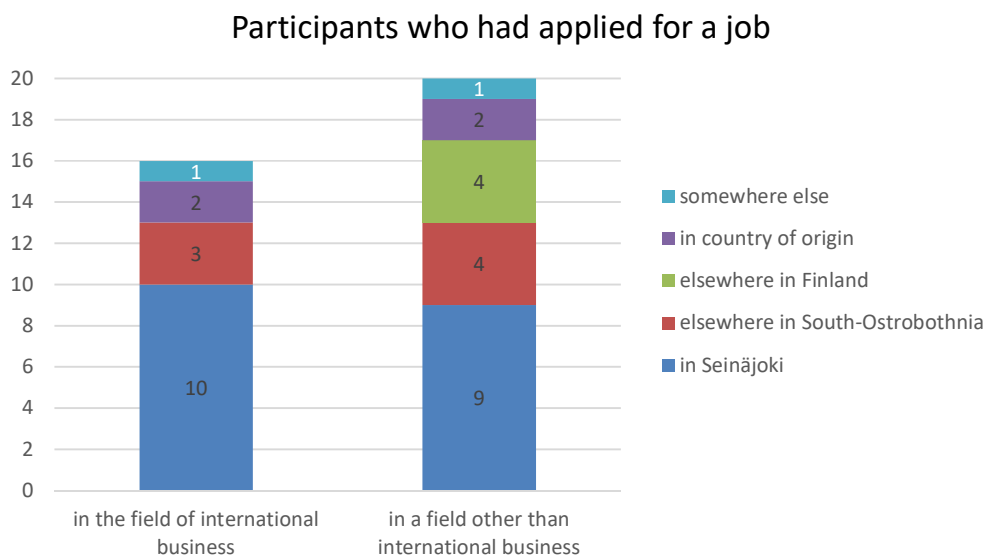


Figure 4. Survey participants' living in Finland.

## 4.2 Language skills

Two participants selected skill level 1 as their Finnish language skill. 11 selected level 2, four selected level 3 and three selected level 4.

When asked about their English language skill, two participants selected level 3. Five participants selected level 4 and 13 selected level 5. None of the participants selected level 2 or lower.

All of the participants answered zero when asked about their skill in Swedish language.

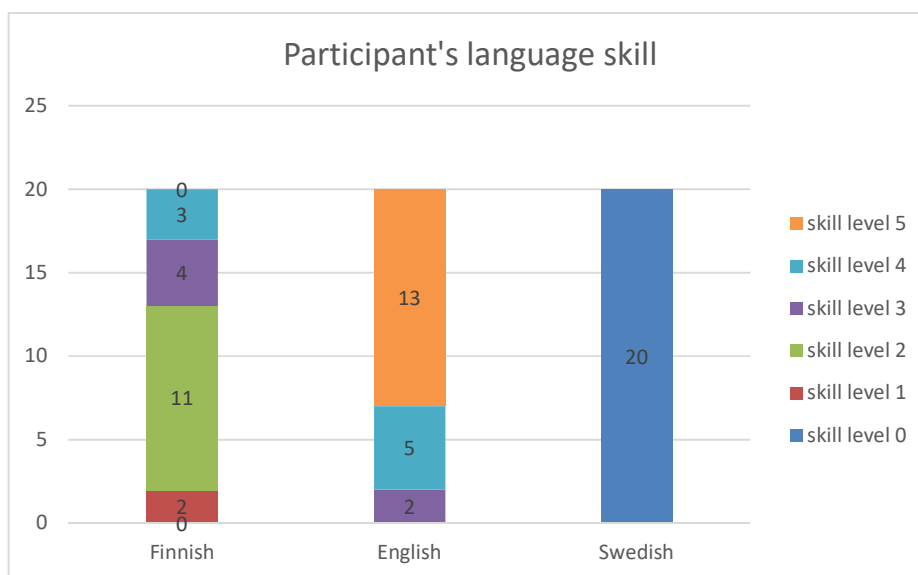


Figure 5. Participants' language skill.

### 4.3 Employment among participants

Out of the 20 participants 15 were employed, two unemployed and three were students.

Eight participants held a permanent position. Six had a fixed term contract and one participant was working temporarily.

Out of 15 employed participants three were working in the field of international business and 12 on working on another field. All of the four participants working in the field of international business held a permanent position.

Of the 12 participants working on other fields five held a permanent position, and six had fixed term contracts, and one was working as a temporary employee.

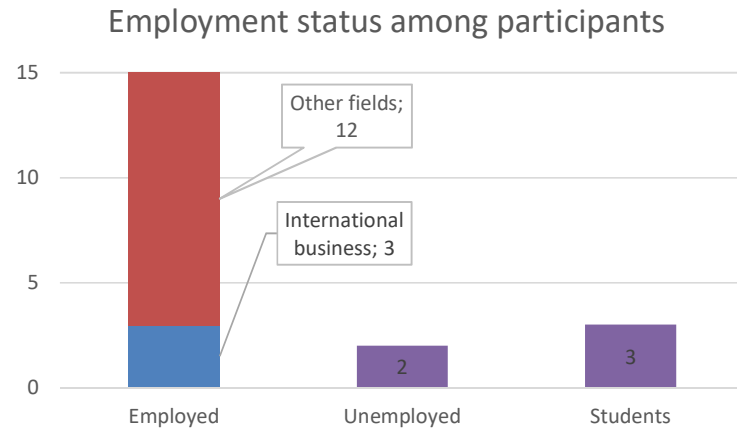


Figure 6. Employment among participants.

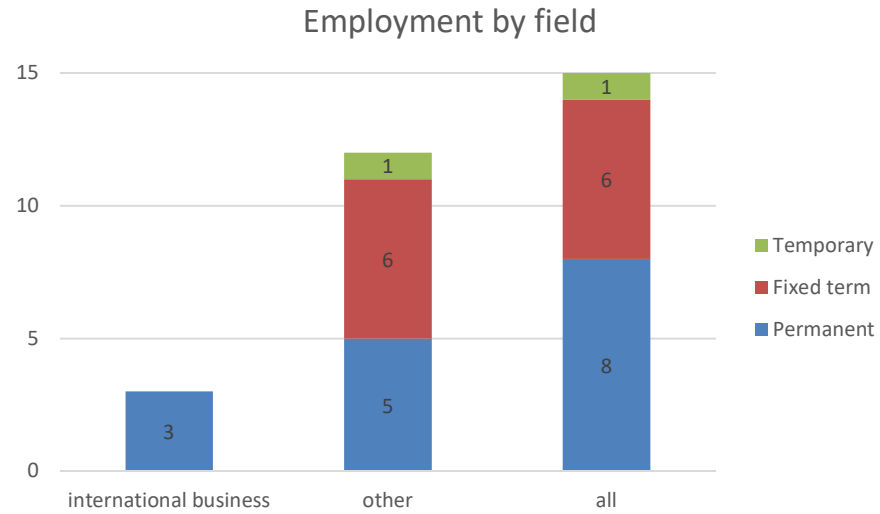


Figure 7. Employment by field.

#### 4.4 Differences in employment between sexes

12 of the participants were male and eight were female.

Participants by sex

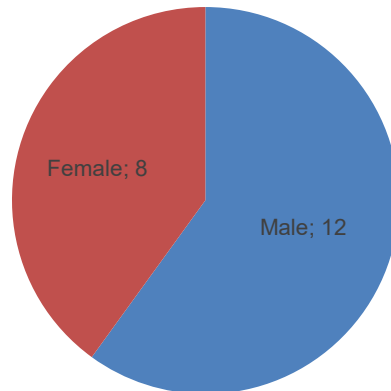


Figure 8. Participants by sex.

All of the 12 men who participated in the study had found employment, five of whom held a permanent position, six had a fixed term contracts, and one was working as a temporary worker.

One of the participant men was working in the field of international business and 11 on other fields. The participant working on the field of international business held a permanent position. Four of the 11 men working on fields other than international business held a permanent position, six had fixed term contracts, and one was working as a temporary worker.

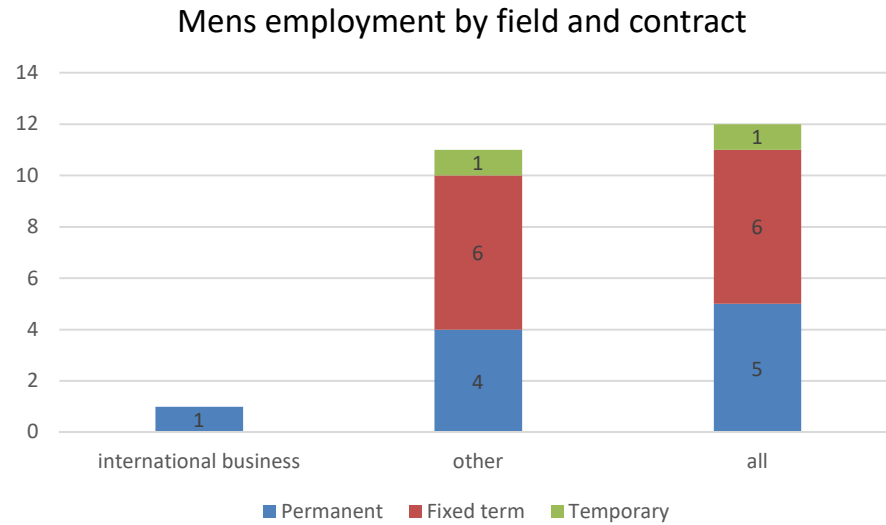


Figure 9. Men's employment by field and contract.

Three of the eight women who participated in the study were employed, two were unemployed, and three were students. All of those three who were employed held permanent positions. Two of the three were working in the field of international business and one was working on another field. One of the participants that were studying had previously worked on the field of international business. None of the participant women were working fixed term or as a temporary worker.

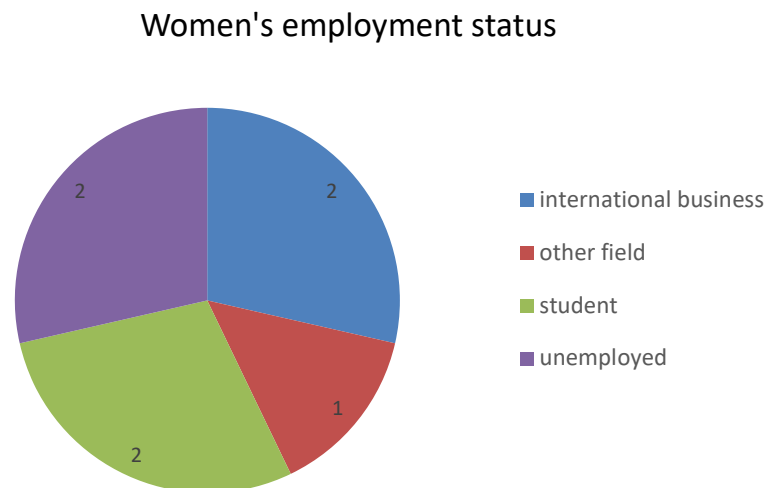


Figure 10. Women's employment status.

#### 4.5 Job Search

14 of the 20 participants had applied for a job in the field of international business. Out of these 14, 10 had done so in Seinäjoki, three elsewhere in South Ostrobothnia, two in their country of origin and one somewhere else. Participants could submit multiple answers to the question.

13 of the 20 participants had applied for a job in a field other than international business. Out of these 13, nine had done so in Seinäjoki, four elsewhere in South Ostrobothnia, four elsewhere in Finland, two in their country of origin and one somewhere else. Participants could submit multiple answers to the question.

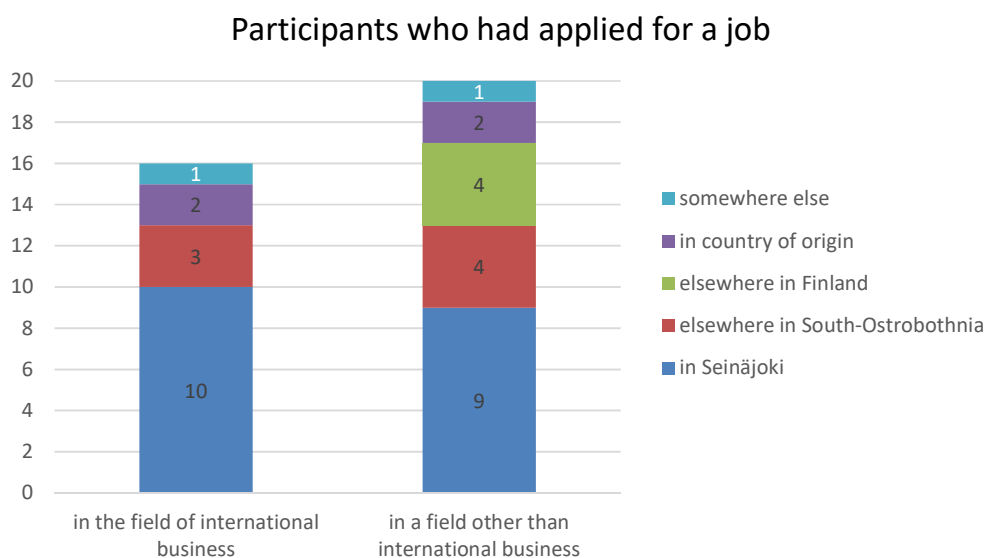


Figure 11. Survey participants' living in Finland.

From 15 participants that were employed 12 had contacted companies directly with by visiting the office or applying with an open application. Two participants had use the services of the employment office. Four participants had utilized job search sites on the internet. Seven had used their own personal networks and four had used social media in job search. It was possible to answer with multiple job search methods, so the total number of answers is higher than the total number of participants.



### Job search channels used by the participants

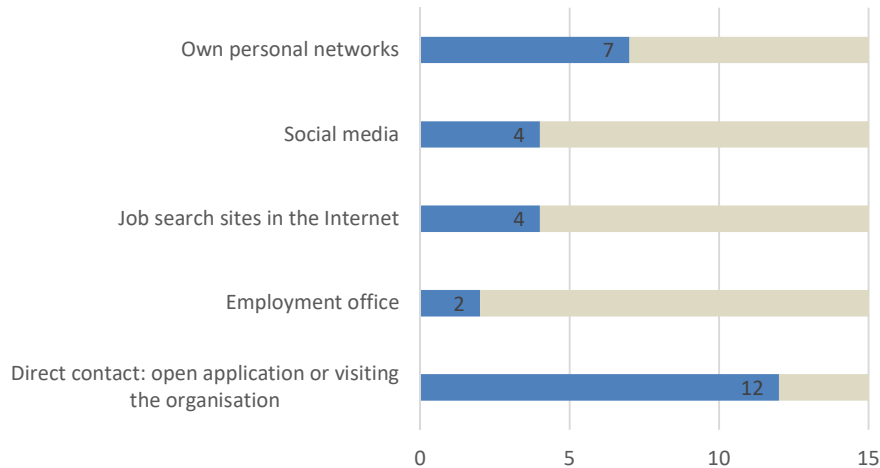


Figure 12. Job search channels used by the participants.

#### 4.6 Time spent on the job market

Two of the 15 employed participants had found employment within two months of entering the job market. For six participants it took one to three months to find employment, four to six months for one participant, seven to eleven months for four participants, and for two participants it took longer than two years to find employment.

#### Time spent on the job market by the employed participants

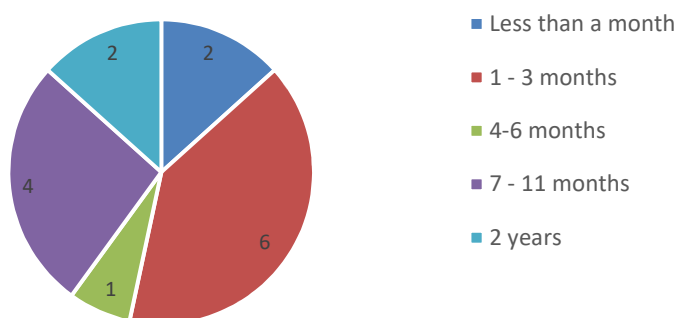


Figure 13. Time spent on the job market by the employed participants.

#### 4.6.1 Participants working on the field of international business

From the four participants working on the field of international business one had found employment within a month of entering the job market. For two participants it took one to three months to find employment and for one participant it took over two years.

Job search time by the participants in the field of international business

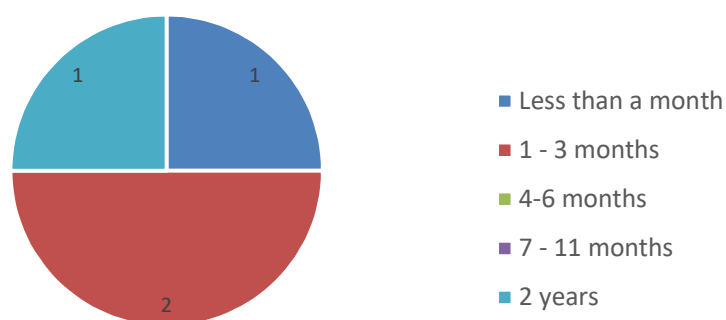


Figure 14. Job search time by the participants in the field of international business.

#### 4.6.2 Participants working in a field other than international business

From the 11 participants working on the field other than international business one found employment within a month of entering the job market. For four participants it took one to three months find employment, four to six months for one participant, and seven to eleven months for four participants.

### Job search time by the participants on other fields

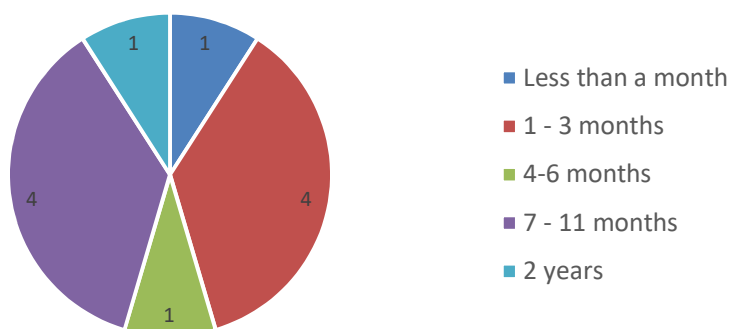


Figure 15. Job search time by the participants in other fields.

#### 4.7 Impact of the bachelor thesis work and the internship on employment

From the 15 participants who were employed one was working in the company where he or she did his or her internship and one participant was working in the company that ordered his or her bachelor thesis. Also, one of the participants who was pursuing higher education had previously worked in the company that had ordered his or her bachelor thesis.

#### 4.8 Participants' personal experiences considering job search

When the participants who were, or had been employed were asked about how difficult finding job was for them, three said it to have been easy. For six participants job search had been hard and for seven it had been very hard.

The participants considered the language barrier to be the biggest challenge in finding work in Finland. Out of 19 participants who answered the question about, 10 mentioned language as a major challenge. One participant specified in his or her

answer that he or she cannot compete for highly sought-after jobs with applicants who speak Finnish. A natively English-speaking participant says that English skill alone, even at native speaker level, is not a distinguishing skill in Finnish job market. The claim is supported by an observation, that the Finnish people in the job market speak English adequately well, while also having the advantage of native proficiency in Finnish language.

Knowing only the target country's language + English = you are not competitive against the natives at all, since their English is acceptable or just as good as your own. You need an additional skill-set. (Natively English-speaking participant.)

Another participant argues that finding work in Finland is a question of persistence. In his or her answer he or she tells to have sent “well over 100” job applications which only led to three interviews. The participant also brings attention to the shortcomings of the Finnish public universities, as they use number of graduates as a meter for success. He brings up the private universities of USA, his native country, where the prestige of the school can be enough to get a graduate employed. Another matter he brings up in his answers is the lack of weight Finnish universities of applied sciences place on graduate’s grades. He says to have had a perfect 5.0 average in Seamk, without having been commended by the school or asked about by an employer. He says the top performers in universities in USA are in high demand and wanted by the employers.

## 5 THE ALUMNI SURVEY RESULTS

The participants were asked what kind of event they would be interested in attending. Most common answers were free socializing or networking events, and lectures. One participant suggested “a cozy tea/ coffee time” for exchanging ideas and experiences.

Most of the participants found weekend afternoons and evenings to be most convenient time for alumni events. Some participants also said weekday evenings to be good for them.

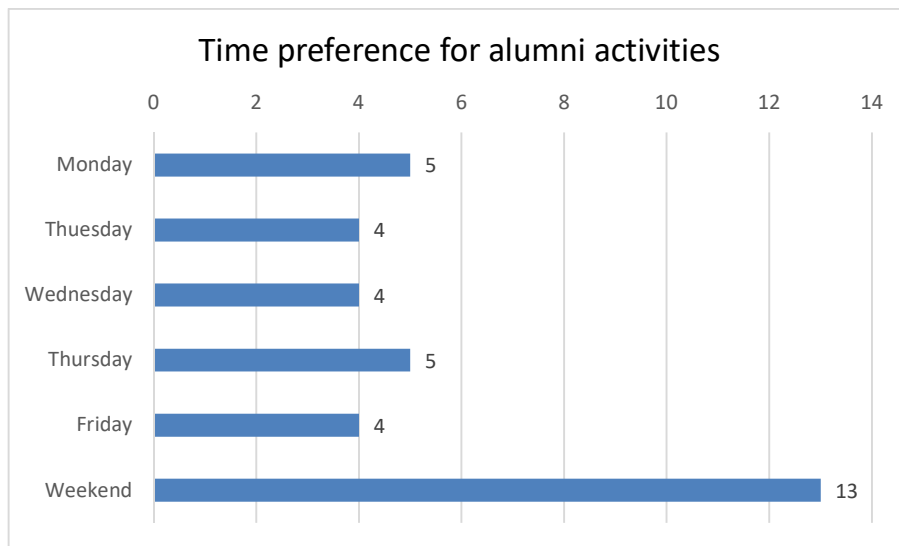


Figure 16. Time preference for alumni activities.

## 6 CONCLUSION

Finland is becoming increasingly international. The fact that people of foreign background have lower employment rate can be partly explained by the swiftness of the transition. Finnish employers are not accustomed to hiring people of foreign origin, and in many cases having a non-Finnish speaking employee would require considerable adjustments. It is likely that as Finland becomes more international, more and more job opportunities open for people of foreign background.

Results of this survey reveals that while a large majority of Seamk IB alumni find employment, it is rarely on a field related to their studies. The time it takes for the participating graduates to find employment varies a lot; clear majority of the participants had found employment within a year from graduating. It must be kept in mind that the sample size in this survey is too small to generalize.

The survey also finds, that large share of non-Finnish Seamk IB alumni reside either in Finland or in their native countries. Half of the participating Seamk alumni are still living in Seinäjoki. Only a few had left Finland and only a single participant had moved out of Finland into a country other than his or her home country. Majority of the participants had applied for a job in Seinäjoki. There were only four participants who had not applied to any job in Finland and two of these gave a report, that they were working in Seinäjoki. There seems to have been a slight miscommunication between the author and the participants in this occasion. A conclusion can be drawn, that the non-Finnish graduates of Seamk are by large staying in Finland and are looking to make life for themselves in there.

Theses and internships had been quite nonconsequential for the participants. Only two reported that either one had had a role in their search for employment.

As was to be expected, language was considered to be the largest obstacle in job search outside one's home country. Multiple participants also reported to have sensed distrust from Finnish employers. The author considers studying the experiences of Finnish employers to be a logical continuum to this study.

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## **APPENDICES**

APPENDIX 1. Survey form

APPENDIX 2. Survey results

## APPENDIX 1. Survey form

4/28/2018

Thesis survey: Employment among non-Finnish graduates of Seamk International Business degree program

### Thesis survey: Employment among non-Finnish graduates of Seamk International Business degree program

Purpose of the this survey is to determine the employment situation among the non-Finnish graduates of Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences degree program in international business. Please read the instructions carefully and answer as accurately as possible. Your answers will be used only for the purposes of this thesis research. wil not be made public in any other context and can't be be linked to your person. The last part of the questionarie is not directly related to the thesis study, but was added by the wish of the faculty in order to plan and organise future alumni events.

A gift certificate of 30e will be drawn among the participants.

Thank you for participating in my thesis study.

Best regards  
Aatu Ahola  
Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences

\*Required

#### Basic information

1. When did you start your studies? \*

Mark only one oval.

- 2016
- 2015
- 2014
- 2013
- 2012
- 2011
- 2010
- 2009
- 2008
- 2007
- 2006
- 2005

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Thesis survey: Employment among non-Finnish graduates of Seamk International Business degree program

**2. Year of graduation \****Mark only one oval.*

- 2017  
 2016  
 2015  
 2014  
 2013  
 2012  
 2011  
 2010  
 2009  
 2008  
 2007  
 2006  
 2005

**3. Sex \****Mark only one oval.*

- Male  
 Female

**4. Home country/ Country of origin \***

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**Language skills**

0: I can't speak or understand the language at all;

1: Elementary Proficiency (I understand the basics of the language and can perform basic tasks such as grocery shopping, traveling, ordering movie tickets etc. using these language skills. I can understand simple phrases and statements.)

2: Limited Working Proficiency (I am able to use the language in a work environment at a limited level. I can handle various social situations with confidence and have intermediate level conversations about current events, my life, my work etc. I can handle simple grammatical constructions accurately but have trouble with more complex structures and make errors fairly often when speaking.)

3: Professional Working Proficiency (I am able to speak the language effectively and accurately in most formal and informal situations covering social, practical, and work topics. My grammatical errors do not interfere with someone understanding my speech.)

4: Full Professional Proficiency I am able to use the language accurately and fluently in most or all areas relevant to my professional and everyday needs. I can participate in a range of conversations with a high degree of fluency and confidence. I would not be confused with a native speaker, but I can respond appropriately even in unfamiliar situations. My errors are rare.)

5: Native or Bilingual Proficiency (I have the speaking proficiency equivalent to an educated native speaker. I have complete fluency in the language, and am knowledgeable of even idioms, colloquialisms, and cultural references.)

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**5. My Finnish language skill level \****Mark only one oval.*

0    1    2    3    4    5

**6. My Swedish language skill level \****Mark only one oval.*

0    1    2    3    4    5

**7. My English language skill level \****Mark only one oval.*

0    1    2    3    4    5

**8. Other language skills; Use the level scale from above (1-5)**

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**Employment****9. I currently live \****Mark only one oval.*

- in Seinäjoki
- elsewhere in Etelä-Pohjanmaa
- elsewhere in Finland
- in my country of origin
- somewhere else

**10. If you answered "somewhere else" to the previous question, please tell us where.**

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Thesis survey: Employment among non-Finnish graduates of Seamk International Business degree program

**11. I have applied for a position in the field of international business \****Tick all that apply.*

- in Seinäjoki
- elsewhere in Etelä-Pohjanmaa
- elsewhere in Finland
- in my country of origin
- somewhere else
- I have not applied for a position in the field of International Business.

**12. If you answered "somewhere else" to the previous question, please tell us where.**

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**13. I have applied for a position in a field other than International Business \****Tick all that apply.*

- in Seinäjoki
- elsewhere in Etelä-Pohjanmaa
- elsewhere in Finland
- in my country of origin
- somewhere else
- I have not applied for a position in a field other than International Business.

**14. If you answered "somewhere else" to the previous question, please tell us where.**

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4/28/2018

Thesis survey: Employment among non-Finnish graduates of Seamk International Business degree program

**15. Have you found employment? \****Mark only one oval.*

Yes, I have found employment in the field of international business *After the last question in this section, skip to question 17.*

Yes, I have found employment in a field other than that of international business *After the last question in this section, skip to question 17.*

I have found employment, but I'm not working at the moment (please answer the question below). *After the last question in this section, skip to question 17.*

No, I have not found employment. *After the last question in this section, skip to question 23.*

I am a full time student. *After the last question in this section, skip to question 25.*

**16. If you answered you have found employment, but are not working at the moment, please describe your situation.**


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**Questions for those employed****17. My employment is \****Mark only one oval.*

permanent

fixed-term

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**18. What is your position in the company or organisation you work for? \***


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Thesis survey: Employment among non-Finnish graduates of Seamk International Business degree program

**19. What channels did you utilize in your job search \****Tick all that apply.*

- Direct contact: open application or visiting the organisation
- Employment office
- Job search sites in the Internet
- Social media
- My own personal networks
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**20. How long did you look for work before your employment? \****Mark only one oval.*

- Less than a month
- 1 - 3 months
- 4-6 months
- 7 - 11 months
- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years
- 5 years
- 6 years
- 7 years
- 8 years
- 9 years
- 10 years
- 11 years
- 12 years
- 13 years
- 14 years
- 15 years

**21. Are you employed by the company at which you did your internship or by the company that ordered/supported your thesis? \****Mark only one oval.*

- Yes, I am employed by the company that ordered my thesis
- Yes, I am employed by the company at which I did my internship.
- Yes, I am employed by the company at which I did my internship and that ordered my thesis.
- No, but I met my current employer through the company at which I did my internship or that ordered my thesis.
- No, my thesis or internship had no direct effect on my employment.

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Thesis survey: Employment among non-Finnish graduates of Seamk International Business degree program

**22. Finding work was \****Mark only one oval.*

- Really easy
- Easy
- Hard
- Really hard
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Skip to question 29.***Questions for the unemployed****23. What channels have you utilized in your job search? \****Tick all that apply.*

- Direct contact: open application or visiting the organisation
- Employment office
- Job search sites in the Internet
- Social media
- My own personal networks
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_



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Thesis survey: Employment among non-Finnish graduates of Seamk International Business degree program

**24. How long have you been looking for employment? \****Mark only one oval.*

- Less than a month
- 1 - 3 months
- 4 - 6 months
- 7 - 11 months
- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years
- 5 years
- 6 years
- 7 years
- 8 years
- 9 years
- 10 years
- 11 years
- 12 years
- 13 years
- 14 years
- 15 years

*Skip to question 29.***Questions for students****25. What are you studying and where?**

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**26. What is the primary teaching language of your study program?**

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Thesis survey: Employment among non-Finnish graduates of Seamk International Business degree program

**27. What did you do between your graduation and starting your current studies?**

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**28. Have you been working while studying? \***

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*Skip to question 29.*

**Answer to the questions that apply to you.**

**29. What do you see as the biggest reason you have not found employment?**

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**30. What do you think is the most challenging about finding employment outside of your native country?**

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**31. What has been the biggest challenge for you when searching for work in Finland as a non-Finnish person?**

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Thesis survey: Employment among non-Finnish graduates of Seamk International Business degree program

32. What do you think are the most valuable skills taught by the BBA program?

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33. How could the university better prepare its students for entry into the work force?

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34. If there is anything else you wish to say, please write your comments below.

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35. A gift certificate of 30€ will be drawn among the participants. Please give us your email address if you wish to take part in the draw. Your email address will only be used for the draw and it will not be used in any part of the research.

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### Questions regarding alumni work

36. Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences is working to increase interaction between the alumni and the current students. What type of event would you be interested in attending? (for example lectures, presentations, free socialising/networking events)

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Thesis survey: Employment among non-Finnish graduates of Seamk International Business degree program

**37. What would be the best time for you to attend an alumni event? (For example weekday evening, in Saturday afternoon or Saturday evening)**

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**38. Does the company or organization you work for have internship or thesis topic opportunities to offer to SeAMK students? Please give any necessary contact information, including who to contact.**

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## APPENDIX 2. Answers to the open questions of the survey

What do you see as the biggest reason you have not found employment?

- There are too few positions available. Due to this, even qualified job seekers face fierce competition. A graduate, with virtually no experience in the field, is at a great disadvantage.
- Lack of Qualified experiences
- Language barrier
- "Peoples negative thinking towards foreigners. Inability of talking fluent Finnish.
- Using inner sources (personal relation) for employing "
- Fluent Finnish language
- I believed it's my culture background
- Nothing because I know I can get other than the one I'm doing.
- People's attitude and narrow mentality
- Employment's career development and level of expertise does not meet my career path
- Too many specialists with same skills
- lack of time next to studies, finns prefer to employ finns, in Vaasa you need to know Swedish language
- Connections
- Language be
- Focus in one or two field
- The real issues don't actually lie in the qualification or the skills that applicants have but the system. I believe that nowadays it's not tough to find a job but it's pretty hard to find one that lasts, or at least something that keeps you from having to hop between jobs. Bad economy has a certain impact on the employment opportunities. Nepotism is also one of the reasons.

What do you think is the most challenging about finding employment outside of your native country?

- I believe the answer to the last question applies to both my native country and Finland. However, since many open positions in Finland require fluent Finnish and sometimes Swedish; my options in Finland are narrowed by the language barrier.
- language, stereotypes and lack of contact persons

- Local citizen priorities
- Language
- language
- Learning the language + setting up your own network of acquaintances
- Competitive market and unemployment ratio higher.
- Language
- Nothing
- Language, system
- Visa status
- Language barrier, cultural differences
- lack of awareness of benefiting from employing foreigners, language barriers
- Language
- Rare information of foreign recruitment
- May be because am a foreigner
- Language skill
- Equipping adequate language skills to use in professional environment.

What has been the biggest challenge for you when searching for work in Finland as a non-Finnish person?

- Searching for work and applying have only required persistence. Being selected for an interview, however, has not been easy. Out of well over 100 applications, only 3 interviews were arranged; none of which were in the international business field.
- stereotypes
- Language
- Language
- language,
- Finding a company who warmly welcomes non-finnish speaker or limited finnish speaker candidates
- Knowing only the target country's language + English = you are not competitive against the natives at all, since their English is acceptable or just as good as your own. You need an additional skill-set.
- Language
- Language and trust
- Language barrie

- Lack of readiness in people to welcome the change.
- The Finnish language is a barrier for highly competitive jobs like marketing
- The biggest challenge is to explain why i am the better choice for the company
- lack of trust from finns, do not want to believe that I can cope with the lingual differences
- Finnish language skills
- Competition with other students
- Language barriers
- Language
- I didn't.

What do you think are the most valuable skills taught by the BBA program?

- Current IT skills, I believe, are the most valuable. In a competitive field of job-seekers, up-to-date IT skills can expand your qualifications beyond a given degree. For example, the job I found combined my previous work experience and my IT skills. My international business education had no weight.
- without a relevant job to the field studied, its difficult to know
- Research and Applying knowledge
- Interpersonal relation
- practical company management
- Cross-cultural - This seems like a no-brainer, but a lot of people who are working have no idea "read between the lines"
- Virtual working enviornment
- Understanding how businesses in been done in the global world
- Marketing
- Socio-business skills
- I appreciate the researching and self study skills I've garnered during my Uni years
- Languages, culture and economics
- "hard skills: knowledge on all business functions, business IT skills
- soft skills: working in team, team management, interpersonal skills"
- Knowledge that you can apply, using practical cases
- More active and practical, have general knowledge of many specific subjects, help students find what area they like and excel so as to decide their higher study
- Marketing

- Can not say
- Not sure.

How could the university better prepare its students for entry into the work force?

- I think the university has prepared its students for entry into the work force. However, job placement is something they need to improve on. I don't think the university has a real interest in job placement. They base their success on number of students graduated. This is the difference between government funded universities and private universities in which tuition is paid by the student. When a student is paying for their own education, they choose a university which has a good job placement percentage. Often times the name of the university is enough to get the student a job.
- by offering internal internships to their international students
- More valuable and legitimate internship or placement
- By organizing seminar and symposium
- increase collaboration with companies
- Working closer with different companies throughout the studies, as a way to introduce the business in E-P to the upcoming workforce and as a way to engage students and introduce networking opportunities
- Through Internship
- By helping them in advance with work placement and job experience within the school organisation
- I think by proving jobs after graduation
- Efficient language classes and integrating skills oriented workshops, co-operation actively with the companies and organization
- Mock-up interviews would be a great help in the job searching process. Some specialized or profession-enriched courses would also sharpen the student's profile and skills at work. For instance, I'm now working in marketing and have to learn SEO, copywriting or ads running to assist my work. Would be great if I would have learned these in Uni.
- Invite potential employers to speak about their needs to students
- more company projects
- Tell more about Finnish companies, laws and requirements



- Encourage students to actively join the course of career plan (learn how to do the interview, complete CV, formal clothes, do and don't...), do some part-time jobs, enhance relationships, interact with different people, more travel
- By giving us the foreign students trials.
- Provide students more work connection
- N/A

Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences is working to increase interaction between the alumni and the current students. What type of event would you be interested in attending? (for example lectures, presentations, free socialising/networking events)

- free socializing and networking
- Online meeting
- Lectures and networking events
- networking events
- Socializing and entertainment events
- All of the above
- Free socialising/networking events.
- Lectures and networking
- Networking events
- socialising/networking events, co-operation with the companies around
- Alumni reunion or free socializing/networking/profession group events would be nice
- Free events
- holding lectures, possibility of being a lecturer
- Networking events
- I'm not able to attend, because I moved to Vaasa
- Socializing events- friendly and cozy tea/ coffee time to exchange ideas and experiences

What would be the best time for you to attend an alumni event? (For example weekday evening, in Saturday afternoon or Saturday evening)

- friday evening
- Monday, Thursday, Sunday
- Saturday afternoon
- saturday afternoon

- Saturday afternoon or Saturday evening
- Saturday afternoon/evening
- Saturday evening
- Saturdays are fine
- Weekday evening
- Weekday evening
- Weekday evening and Saturday
- Weekend evenings
- weekends
- Weekends

Does the company or organization you work for have internship or thesis topic opportunities to offer to SeAMK students? Please give any necessary contact information, including who to contact.

- Somewhat - Xport
- I have no idea about that
- I don't think so
- Not anymore.
- Maybe. SeAMK could contact me at [dinhngoc.ttt@gmail.com](mailto:dinhngoc.ttt@gmail.com)/[info@greatsaigon.com](mailto:info@greatsaigon.com)
- My thesis topic related to Neste Oil and they also have opportunities for internship or thesis topic